

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
*on the*  
**DRAFT ATLANTIC SALMON RECOVERY PLAN**

1. *What is a recovery plan?*

A recovery plan provides a roadmap to increase the abundance of a threatened or endangered species and to significantly reduce threats to the species and its habitat. Recovery plans contain the following components: management actions needed to recover each species, criteria for showing when the species is partially (downlisting criteria) or fully recovered (delisting criteria), and time and costs estimates for achieving recovery. Recovery plans include biological information about the listed species, threats, conservation achieved, a recovery strategy and criteria for measuring recovery progress, recovery actions, and a schedule for implementing these actions.

2. *What is the Scope of this Recovery Plan?*

The subject of this recovery plan is the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of Atlantic Salmon. The Services listed the DPS as endangered in December 2000. The Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon includes all naturally reproducing remnant populations of Atlantic salmon from the Kennebec River downstream of the former Edwards Dam site, northward to the mouth of the St. Croix River. At the time of listing, there were at least eight rivers in the geographic range of the DPS known to still support wild Atlantic salmon populations (Dennys, East Machias, Machias, Pleasant, Narraguagus, Ducktrap and Sheepscot rivers and Cove Brook). The draft recovery plan applies only to the Gulf of Maine DPS.

3. *Does the recovery plan establish new rules or regulations?*

No, the recovery plan does not automatically establish new regulations. Recovery plans are non-regulatory documents which provide guidance to Federal, State and local agencies on actions necessary and appropriate to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species. Recovery actions listed in the plan are recommendations only and do not establish prohibitions.

4. *When will the Recovery Plan be finalized?*

The Services will strive to complete a final plan within a year of the date the draft plan was issued for public review. The process for completing the final plan includes considering all of the comments submitted on the draft plan, including those from independent peer reviewers, as well as any new information on Atlantic salmon and threats to the species and its habitat.

5. *How much will recovery cost, who is responsible for funding recovery actions, and what is the burden on the citizens of Maine?*

The total cost of recovery cannot be determined at this time. The Implementation Schedule, however, does contain cost estimates for recovery actions recommended for the next three years, which add up to a total estimated cost of \$33.2 million. Although recovery plans identify actions and include estimates of implementation costs, they do not commit any agency, group or individual to spending those funds on those activities. Ultimately, implementation of the Recovery Plan depends on a range of agencies, organizations, industries and individuals using their authority and available funding to implement the actions in the Plan. During the public review and comment period the Services will work with the State of Maine and other interested parties to finalize the Implementation Schedule, including refining costs estimates for recovery actions. Funding for these actions will be sought through a variety of sources. While recovery plans do not obligate the expenditure of funds or in of themselves provide funding, they do identify the actions that the Services believe are necessary for recovery. In doing so, this Recovery Plan serves as a road map to recovery, helping to ensure that funds are used in the most efficient and strategic manner possible, and providing a context for identifying and meeting funding needs necessary to recover Maine's wild Atlantic salmon populations.

6. *What is the goal of recovery for Maine's Atlantic salmon DPS?*

The goal of the recovery program is removal of the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Recovery will be achieved when conditions have been attained that allow self-sustaining populations to persist under minimal ongoing management and investment of resources. Current populations of Atlantic salmon are extremely low, therefore the time frame of recovery is uncertain. The initial focus will be to halt and reverse the decline of wild populations within the DPS rivers. Initially, recovery will be measured by the following criteria: 1) Atlantic salmon are perpetuated in at least the eight DPS rivers, and 2) The replacement rate of adult salmon exceeds losses. The Services and State partners have explored several approaches to establishing final demographic recovery criteria for the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon, but have concluded that all currently available methods are insufficient for purposes of this plan. The Services anticipate the development of objective, measurable final reclassification and delisting criteria within three years of recovery plan approval. Whenever recovery criteria or other significant changes to a recovery plan are developed, the public is provided an opportunity, in accordance with the ESA, to review and comment on those changes within the context of a revised recovery plan. Atlantic salmon will be considered for removal (delisted) from the endangered species list when the threats to the DPS have been addressed and the DPS can exist without further protection of the ESA.

7. *How does the Recovery Plan compare to the recent National Research Council report on Atlantic salmon in Maine?*

The Services' preliminary review of the NRC's January 20, 2004 report indicates that the report's findings are generally consistent with this draft Recovery Plan. However, several issues within this report warrant additional consideration as we develop a final

recovery plan. The Services are seeking public comment on these and other findings and recommendations in the NRC report as they relate to this Recovery Plan. It is important to note that the scope of the NRC report is broader than this Recovery Plan; the NRC report considered all Atlantic salmon populations in Maine, whereas the Recovery Plan focuses only on the Gulf of Maine DPS.

8. *What is the relationship between the Recovery Plan and the State of Maine's Conservation Plan?*

Atlantic salmon conservation and restoration efforts involving private citizens as well as local, state, federal and international organizations have been underway in Maine for more than 150 years. The State of Maine's Atlantic Salmon Conservation Plan for Seven Maine Rivers (MASCP) provides the basis for many important ongoing Atlantic salmon conservation and recovery activities. The Recovery Plan proposes recovery actions that build on and compliment continuing conservation efforts identified in the MASCP. In terms of differences between the two plans, the recovery plan addresses certain threats, particularly the threat posed by existing aquaculture practices, in more detail than does the MASCP. The recovery plan also addresses rangewide threats, such as continued low marine survival, and outlines actions for mitigating those threats. Overall, the federal Recovery Plan addresses a broader range of issues than does the MASCP, which focuses on threats and actions that fall under the State's jurisdiction.

9. *What are the major threats to recovery (to salmon) identified by the Recovery Plan?*

No single factor can be pinpointed as the cause of the decline of the DPS, rather, all the threats that were key factors in the listing determination in addition to other recently identified threats, have the potential to adversely affect Atlantic salmon and/or their habitat. Continuing research and assessment is needed to understand the impacts and interactions of all of the threats faced by the DPS. Although further investigation is needed to understand the impacts and interactions of the numerous factors affecting the survival and recovery of the DPS, an assessment conducted during the course of recovery planning identified the most significant threats based on geographic extent, severity of effect on different life stages, and the possibility of mitigating the threat through management actions. These include the following (not listed in priority order):

- Acidified water and associated aluminum toxicity, which decrease juvenile survival
- Aquaculture practices
- Excessive or unregulated water withdrawal
- Incidental capture of adults and parr by recreational fisherman
- Poaching of adults in DPS rivers
- Predation

10. *What are some examples of major recovery actions proposed by the plan, and how are actions prioritized?*

The Recovery Plan includes prioritized actions to recover the DPS. The major areas of action are designed to stop and reverse the downward population trends of the eight wild Atlantic salmon populations and minimize the potential for human activities to result in the degradation or destruction of Atlantic salmon habitat essential to survival and recovery. The Recovery Plan assigns priority numbers (1, 2, or 3) to recovery actions to indicate the relative importance of the numerous actions that are needed for Atlantic salmon recovery. Priority 1 recovery actions are those actions necessary to prevent extinction or prevent the species from declining irreversibly. Considering the status of the DPS, Priority 1 actions will be the initial focus of plan implementation, although priority 2 and 3 actions may be implemented simultaneously due to available resources, opportunity, and local need. Some examples of Priority 1 actions include evaluating the impacts of acid rain on juvenile Atlantic salmon in DPS rivers, and continuing (along with monitoring and evaluation) the river-specific stocking program.

11. *Where can I get a copy of the recovery plan, and how can I comment on it?*

Copies of the draft recovery plan can be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Atlantic Salmon Recovery Plan Coordinator at the following address:

NOAA Fisheries  
Attn: Atlantic Salmon Recovery Plan Coordinator  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930  
978-281-9328 x 6534

Copies of the draft plan are also available online at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/> and <http://endangered.fws.gov>. The 90-day public comment period for the draft recovery plan will run through September 16, 2004. During that time, the Services are soliciting review and comment from the public and all interested parties. Concurrently with the public review, the recovery plan will undergo independent scientific peer review. All comments should be mailed to the address above; comments and materials may also be sent electronically to: [SalmonRecovery@noaa.gov](mailto:SalmonRecovery@noaa.gov). The Services will hold two public meetings/hearings in the State of Maine to discuss the recovery plan with interested parties and solicit comments. For further information contact: Mark Minton (NOAA Fisheries), Atlantic Salmon Recovery Plan Coordinator (978-281-9328 extension 6534); Pat Scida (NOAA Fisheries), Endangered Species Coordinator (978-281-9208); or Martin Miller (FWS), Chief, Endangered Species Division (413-253-8615).

To become directly involved with recovery implementation efforts, contact one of the many private and public organizations involved in Atlantic salmon conservation efforts in your community.